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Unlikely partners team up for criminal justice reform

BY WILLIAM DOUGLAS
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WASHINGTON

Rep. Mark Walker, a conservative Republican, wants the GOP-controlled Congress to move on long-stalled efforts to revamp the nation's criminal justice system next year — and he's enlisted a seemingly unlikely ally: The head of the Congressional Black Caucus.

Walker, R-N.C., chairman of the conservative House Republican Study Committee, is teaming with Chairman Cedric Richmond, D-La.

Walker leads the largest group of conservatives in the House of Representatives, 157 Republicans, including 17 House committee chairs.

Richmond steers a group of 49 African-American lawmakers — 48 Democrats, one Republican (Mia Love of Utah) and



Rep. Cedric Richmond



Rep. Mark Walker

two Democratic senators.

Richmond and Walker agree the current criminal justice system negatively impacts

families, particularly in communities of color, costs the federal government too much money, and does little to reduce the rate of recidivism. The United States accounts for only 5 percent of the world's population but 25 percent of its prison population.

"We want something that can really impact the legislative system like we haven't seen in many years," Walker told McClatchy. "We felt that if the

chairmen of the Congressional Black Caucus and the Republican Study Committee can come together on something, it may create enough attention to say 'Okay, maybe this is bigger than the political lingo that you hear out of D.C. every week.'"

The two lawmakers, who met for the first time last week, are taking small steps initially: They're working on a criminal justice op/ed piece that they hope to have published in early December.

"Ultimately, our teams will hopefully work together, that we can genuinely have a piece of legislation, a bill that can come out of the House," Walker said. "There's probably going to be tweaking, adjusting, massaging

SEE JUSTICE, 4A

EDUCATION

Advocates see growing disdain for universities

BY KEVIN SULLIVAN
AND MARY JORDAN
Washington Post

COCHISE, ARIZONA

Frank Antenori shot the head off a rattlesnake at his back door last summer — a deadeye pistol blast from 20 feet. No college professor taught him that. The U.S. Army trained him, as a marksman and a medic, on the "two-way rifle range" of Afghanistan and Iraq.

Useful skills. Smart return on taxpayers' investment. Not like the waste he sees at too many colleges and universities, where he says liberal professors teach "ridiculous" classes and indoctrinate students "who hang out and protest all day long and cry on our dime."

"Why does a kid go to a major university these days?" said Antenori, 51, a former Green Beret who served in the Arizona state legislature. "A lot of Republicans would say they go there to get brainwashed and learn how to become activists and basically go out in the world and cause trouble."

Antenori is part of an increasingly vocal campaign to transform higher education in America. Though U.S. universities are envied around the world, he and other conservatives want to reduce the flow of government cash to what they see as elitist, politically correct institutions that often fail to provide practical skills for the job market.

To the alarm of many educators, nearly every state has cut funding to public colleges and universities since the 2008 financial crisis. Adjusted for inflation, states spent \$5.7 billion less on public higher education last year than in 2008, even though they were educating more than 800,000 additional students, according to the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association.

In Arizona, which has had a Republican governor and legislature since 2009, lawmakers have cut spending for higher education by 54 percent since 2008; the state now spends \$3,500 less per year on every student,

SEE UNIVERSITIES, 10A

After almost 40 years, educator still tends to tots at high school



T. KEUNG HUI khui@newsobserver.com

Paulette Hicks, director of the Athens Drive Child Development Center at Athens Drive High School in Raleigh, works with children last week. Hicks has been at the school teaching preschoolers since it opened in 1978.

BY T. KEUNG HUI
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RALEIGH

For nearly 40 years, there have been two constants at Athens Drive High School: the sight of preschool children walking the halls, and Paulette Hicks, there to greet them.

Athens Drive opened in 1978 as the only Wake County high school with a child care center — a distinction the West Raleigh school still holds. And all through the last 39 years, Hicks has been director of the Athens Drive Child Development Center and has helped hundreds of young children get the educational start they've needed.

Last week, Hicks was recognized at a Wake County school

board meeting with a district Employee Excellence Award. She was called an "integral part" of the school's community.

"She is a magical educator," Jason Hughes, a Wake school system director of human resources, said at the meeting. "She genuinely cares for each Little Jag and Junior Jag and prepares them for elementary school. Her commitment to education and masterful teaching are inspiring to all."

Hicks was a kindergarten teacher at Douglas Elementary School in Raleigh when she was in put in charge of running the new child care center. The program was envisioned as a laboratory to help high school students who were interested in careers in early childhood

SEE HICKS, 10A



Courtesy of Paulette Hicks

"I've always loved teaching, and Athens has always been my heart, truly," Paulette Hicks says. Here, she reads to children at Athens Drive Child Development Center in the 1980s.

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